

Food Safety Alert – 10/30/06

Although there has been no conclusion to the E. coli investigation, over the weekend California and Federal Health officials declared the E. Coli outbreak over (however, neither the FDA, CDC, nor the CA Dept. of Health Services have updated their websites with this information). 204 people were sickened in 26 states and Canada, and 3 people were killed. As far as the investigation, Kevin Reilly of the California Department of Health Services said that investigators have found other strains of the virulent bacterium known as E. coli 0157:H7 on two of the three other ranches. All of the bacteria came from the droppings of grass-fed cattle, rather than feedlots.

<http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=20601103&sid=aSdKueKkdaSE&refer=us>

Sam Farr held an E. Coli summit on Friday in Salinas at the Monterey County Ag. Office. The summit was attended by 70 lawmakers, health officials and members of the local ag industry, including representatives from the U.S. Dept of Agriculture, the Federal Food and Drug Administration, the Secretary of Agriculture in Sacramento, the head of California Department of Health Services, and members of the Agriculture Research Service. Farr used the summit to urge the audience to continue improving safety standards on farms. He also announced plans to request \$6 million from the federal government for more research into E. coli and other health issues. The research is projected to take somewhere between four to five years, and will offer important insight into better farming practices.

<http://kcbs.com/pages/116250.php?contentType=4&contentId=231504>

Food safety discussions at the meeting included added emphasis by USFDA officials and on separating animals from crops. Mark Roh, regional FDA director, said vegetable producers must come up with "some sort of strategy to enhance the protection" of crops. Although it won't solve the entire issue, it will help prevent such outbreaks in the future.

<http://www.montereyherald.com/mld/montereyherald/news/local/15871748.htm>

The *San Jose Mercury News* ran an AP article on Saturday detailing the investigative process in this outbreak, and concluding that it has been the most thorough probe into food contamination ever. Health officials have come closer to pinpointing the source of contamination than ever before. And experts say the investigation has yielded valuable clues for preventing future outbreaks. "We put more people and far more resources into this than ever before," said Jack Guzewish, director of emergency coordination and response for the FDA's Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition. More than two dozen investigators were sent out across the country and collected more than 750 samples of soil, feces, and well water.

http://www.mercurynews.com/mld/mercurynews/news/local/states/california/northern_california/15873620.htm

Nationally, CBSNews.com is running an article today reporting that State and federal investigators have narrowed their focus to one ranch, where a boar trampled fences that had hemmed in a spinach field.

Samples taken from a wild pig, as well as from stream water and cattle on the ranch, have tested positive for the same strain of E. coli implicated in the outbreak.

<http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2006/10/26/national/main2129739.shtml>.

Forbes.com has a similar article:

<http://www.forbes.com/forbeslife/health/feeds/hscout/2006/10/26/hscout535763.html>.

Click here for the USA Today version:

http://www.usatoday.com/news/health/2006-10-26-pigs-spinach_x.htm